

### Testimony of Barbara Klipper

Thank you very much for allowing me to be here and to testify. I am here to speak on behalf of House Bill #5556 to extend the Pilot Program for adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders into two additional areas of Connecticut. I make this request of you wearing two hats: I am here representing my husband, David Daniel Klipper, who is the Co-Chair of the Advisory Board for the Department of Autism Services and who could not get time off work in order to be here today, but mostly I am here as the mother of a child with autism who is about to age out of the educational system and who desperately needs adult services.

My son Matt, who is now almost 22, was diagnosed with autism before he was two. He has the emotional age, pragmatic language and social skills of about a seven year old. He has issues with temper when thwarted and has experienced two psychiatric hospitalizations. He is someone who needs significant support and structure to function within the community. However, in addition to these issues, he suffers from an even more significant problem for an adult with autism in the State of Connecticut – he is not mentally retarded.

We have been looking for appropriate adult programming for Matt for years. This has not been easy. There are almost no programs in existence for adults with autism and those typically are aimed at clients of DDS and are therefore reserved for people whose IQ's are under 70. We are fortunate in one sense – due to the severity of his disability, Matt has been found eligible for services by DMHAS, but there are many individuals who have nowhere to go and are not so fortunate. There is clearly something wrong when parents feel badly that their child with autism does not also have mental retardation

because that would allow him to get some of the programming and supports he desperately needs.

The Pilot Program for adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders has been a programmatic success,. With it in place, Connecticut has started to make strides in a number of important areas: providing services to adults with ASD who are not mentally retarded, developing training programs for professionals to work with such individuals, and identifying those interventions that are most effective for this population. However, the existing pilot is only able to achieve these things on a very small scale; continued and meaningful success in these efforts will only be possible with a larger pool of participants. And of course, adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder live throughout Connecticut, not just in the catchment area of the current pilot program, and these individuals are equally deserving of services.

This program offers hope to a population that currently often lives without it. Not only on behalf of my son, but on behalf of all adults with ASD in the State of Connecticut and their families, I urge you to pass this bill. Thank you very much for your attention.